

**To:** Ferrell, Mark[Ferrell.Mark@epa.gov]  
**From:** Mark Ferrell  
**Sent:** Tue 2/4/2014 2:44:31 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: ROCKEFELLER STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD ON ONGOING WV WATER CRISIS

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Rockefeller, Press (Rockefeller)" <[Press@rockefeller.senate.gov](mailto:Press@rockefeller.senate.gov)>  
**Date:** February 4, 2014 9:32:29 AM EST  
**Subject:** ROCKEFELLER STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD ON ONGOING WV WATER CRISIS



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Andrew

February 4, 2014

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## ROCKEFELLER STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD ON ONGOING WV WATER CRISIS

*Senator offers official statement for the record at  
Senate hearing examining the safety and security of  
drinking water in West Virginia*

~ To watch the hearing live, click [here](#) ~

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Jay Rockefeller released the following statement as his official testimony for this morning's U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works' Water and Wildlife Subcommittee hearing:

Senator Jay Rockefeller  
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works  
Water and Wildlife Subcommittee Hearing  
"Examination of the Safety and Security of Drinking Water Supplies  
Following the Central West Virginia Drinking Water Crisis"  
Statement for the Record  
February 4, 2014

Mr. Chairman, I thank you and Chairman Boxer for holding this hearing today and for your support and assistance of your expert staffs during this devastating crisis.

West Virginia's water crisis may no longer be headlining national news, but let me be clear -- every day parents, teachers, public officials, and shop owners ask: Is our water safe? No one should have to ask that question.

The challenge of how to safely manufacture, transport, and store chemicals is something that this Committee has taken on in the past. And, it is a matter that policymakers must address at all levels of government.

Through no fault of their own, 300,000 people have been thrust into an unthinkable disaster that has left them wondering when they'll be able to trust their water again.

Across nine counties, people were told for 10 days not to use their water for drinking, cooking, cleaning, bathing or washing. Schools and commerce were shuttered. Communities scrambled for bottled water not by choice, but by necessity, and people suffered incredible burdens.

West Virginians want to know four things:

- (1) How did this happen?
- (2) Is the water now safe?
- (3) What are the long-term health consequences? And,
- (4) How do we make sure this never happens again?

At my request, the Chemical Safety Board is investigating the spill. In addition, the state is addressing this and a criminal investigation is ongoing. We must demand an explanation for how this happened. And Freedom Industries and others must be held accountable for the appalling damage inflicted upon the lives of hundreds of thousands of West Virginians who have been endangered by unsafe water.

It has been a financially taxing and emotionally grinding month for families and businesses who have struggled with concerns about the water safety, worries about long-term health effects of this chemical exposure, and the noxious odor that remains in their water. Despite government assurances that the water is safe, doubt lingers. Too many unanswered questions remain.

State and federal agencies are working to find answers, but deficiencies in our regulatory structure and the lack of adequate funding for federal agencies have made their jobs infinitely more difficult.

We must be certain that new findings, or outside data, be shared among the federal and state agencies working to address this spill, as well as with the public as fully and quickly as possible.

We will get the answers people need to have confidence to use the water. But, it should not have to take as long as it has.

Senator Manchin and I, along with Senator Boxer, have introduced a bill that would require regular state inspections of chemical storage facilities in watersheds and make sure those facilities are held accountable for developing an emergency response plan when an incident like a leak occurs.

I also cosponsored two bills with Senator Schatz that would hold companies like Freedom Industries accountable when spills of non-hazardous substances occur.

But, these are targeted fixes to discrete problems.

Industry will resist any new regulations or stronger enforcement measures. It's an isolated incident in West Virginia, they will argue. Agencies in charge of oversight do not need more resources, some will claim. In fact, Republicans have purposely sought to starve certain agencies of funding so they cannot do their job adequately. We continue to pay a price for this cynical strategy.

Over thirty years, I have heard these complaints all too often from chemical companies, coal operators, railroads – really too many industries to name. We can no longer trade the public's health and welfare for industry profits. As we have seen in West Virginia, when you cannot drink the water, not much else matters. Not much business gets done. The long-term economic damage from this crisis is almost immeasurable and the breach of trust seems irreparable.

I am committed to working with the Members of the Committee to strengthen regulations and to properly fund and staff oversight agencies.

West Virginia is a special place – one that I love dearly. So I thank the Committee for focusing its attention on understanding what happened, and how we make sure it never happens again.